Bill Ellis

Whispers in an Ice Cream Parlor: Culinary Tourism, Contemporary Legends, and the Urban Interzone

A contemporary legend active in 1910 held that white women were at risk of being abducted into involuntary slavery if they visited an ice cream parlor. This article grounds this legend in the emergence of ice cream into everyday American foodways, a trend paralleled by the growing economic impact of Mediterranean immigrants and by the increasing practice of "warehousing" potentially marriageable women of Western and Northern European descent in big-city colleges and technical schools. The ethnic-owned ice cream "parlor" thus became a liminal interzone in which single women engaged in culinary tourism in a way that was seen as dangerous to their ethnic identity.

"Ice cream parlors," solemnly stated Miss Florence Mabel Dedrick in 1910, "are the places where scores of girls have taken their first step downward." Dedrick's remarks appeared in an enormously popular book titled *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls, or, War on the White Slave Trade*, a collection of various crusaders' accounts of combating the alleged criminal conspiracy that trapped scores of unwary white girls into entering a life of prostitution. Her contribution gave her impressions as a rescue missionary working among the denizens of Chicago's red-light district. Innocent country girls, drawn to the big city by its attractions and promise of good jobs, came in contact with the agents of Satan, who lurked inside movie theaters, amusement parks, fruit stores, and, most especially, ice cream parlors. And the danger was spreading, Dedrick said: ice cream was the bait attracting young girls "even in the large country town," where white slavers, the malign agents of a national and international market in prostitutes, had recruiting stations (Dedrick 1910:111).

Another contributor to *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls*, Chicago's federal district attorney, Edwin W. Sims, claimed to have personally examined some 250 victims of white slavery and had documented the peril with multiple confessions from its perpetrators. "One thing should be made very clear to the girl who comes up to the city," Sims warned, "and that is that the ordinary ice cream parlor is very likely to be a spider's web for her entanglement." When such places are owned by foreigners, the danger is greater, and he alluded to "scores of cases . . . where young girls have taken

Bill Ellis is Professor of English and American Studies at Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton

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their first step towards 'white slavery'" in such establishments. "And it is hardly too much to say," he added, "that a week does not pass in Chicago without the publication in some daily paper of the details of a police court in which the ice cream parlor of this type is the scene of a regrettable tragedy." The only safe course, he concluded: stay away from any such establishment, whether in Chicago or in any town in which one has opened (Sims 1910:71).

Comments such as these are often posted for their comic effect on Web sites devoted to the history of what has become one of the most common and uncontroversial of American desserts. But in the context of the white slave panic of a hundred years ago, these rumors were not at all humorous. The nativistic and xenophobic emotions that fueled this panic have been studied recently by a number of scholars (e.g., J. Adams 2005; Donovan 2006; Langum 2007; Morone 2003). As these more generally historical treatments explain, the crusade was led by a coalition of nativistic religious organizations that linked the growing rate of immigration to criminal undergrounds in urban areas. These efforts were coordinated into political action by Sims, whom I have quoted above, and by his close friend James R. Mann, a U.S. representative from Cook County. In fact, no evidence ever was presented that prostitution relied on inexperienced women who were kidnapped and forced into the profession; nevertheless, the panic was influential in the passage of the 1910 Mann Act, which made it illegal to transport women intended for prostitution from one state to another. While no ethnic crime ring was ever successfully prosecuted under this act, it led the way to a series of emergency measures imposing strict restrictions on immigration, believed to be an additional feeder of "white slaves" into the country. "White slavery" was an important factor in the marginalization of ethnic minorities during the early twentieth century, and the Mann Act is now notorious for its use to harass upwardly mobile African Americans like Jack Johnson and Chuck Berry.

However, this article will move in a different direction, asking why the legend named an *ice cream parlor* as the site of these women's downfall, rather than a place devoted to some other popular food. It will explore how this contemporary legend implicitly commented on the increasing visibility and influence of immigrants, particularly Italian Americans and Middle Easterners, during the first decade of ice cream's popularity in American foodways. We will see how the smack of foreignness made the seemingly innocuous dish of ice cream a forbidden fruit of ethnic tourism and how the female consumer independent enough to indulge in it became, potentially, a "fallen woman." Ice cream quickly became an all-American food during the next decades, like the German-derived apple pie and the aptly named french fry, whose entry into American foodways, as Karen Hess (2001) has documented, came through meals prepared by Etienne LeMaire, the Paris-born White House *maître d'hôtel* during Thomas Jefferson's administration (1801–1809). Hence the white slavery rumor became increasingly irrelevant. Nevertheless, this article will explore the way that this relatively novel treat for a time became a potent symbol of how the American landscape was rapidly changing in the face of emerging Mediterranean neighborhoods. In a parallel way, it will note how the banana, another novelty of the era associated with immigrants, likewise attracted the same dangerously exotic aura, a reputation it continues to hold in current Internet legends.

Contemporary Legend and Culinary Tourism

The study of food, as Charles Camp argued in his influential survey *American Foodways* (1989), needs to take into consideration more than the foodstuffs that form the basis of dishes, the customs of preparing them, and the statistical analysis of when, where, and by whom they are consumed. Foodways consist of complex symbol systems by which people continually affirm or redefine their cultural identities. "Food is one of the most, if not the single most, visible badges of identity," he emphasizes, "pushed to the fore by people who believe their culture to be on the wane, their daughters drifting from their heritage, their sons gone uptown" (29). Thus we can readily see how the act of consuming food can in itself be a communicative act, one that could (as Camp suggests) express a conservative impulse to maintain "home values" through adherence to "down home" menu options.

Conversely, as Lucy M. Long (2003) has more recently suggested, foodways could embody subversive impulses, challenging traditional values by introducing new options. In this mode, which she has termed "culinary tourism," people use food to try on new identities and explore alternative ways of life. She says that foodways embody an *ethos*, or a spiritual attitude toward human beings' proper relationship to nature. Consuming "organic" foods, Long suggests, allows consumers a way of "trying out" such an alternative spiritual worldview (2003:30–1). Extending her point a little, though, we can see that such acts of tourism could imply not just curiosity but a desire to rebel against powerful cultural forces. Organic or vegetarian foodways may simply have a nostalgic element, looking back to a time when the relationship between humans and nature was simpler and more direct. But much of the cultural discussion around "organic gardening" in recent times has focused on a deeply felt *desire* for an alternative to the economic forces that have controlled many Americans' dietary choices. Choosing organic, we might say, is choosing something other than the mainstream, and making that decision is, on a cultural level, more significant than the actual benefits of such produce.

In addition, Long has argued, foodways can be "about individuals satisfying curiosity" by means of experiencing new dishes "in a mode that is out of the ordinary, that steps outside the normal routine to notice difference and the power of food to represent and negotiate that difference" (2003:20). Such an experience, she stresses, involves a conscious choice to step outside one's traditional cultural landscape and explore an unknown sensory terrain. In some cases, she notes, the experience is pleasant, and the food then becomes an aesthetically pleasing part of one's own culture. In other cases, satisfying one's curiosity is itself enjoyable, even if one does not enjoy the tastes, because in so doing one has temporarily declared independence from the typical culinary choices of one's home culture.

And in still others, one unwittingly transgresses profound cultural taboo lines. Long describes how she and some Western companions traveling in Burma happened on a lunchroom and ordered a dish, recognizing its "general category" but not its specific identity. She and the others "ate enthusiastically" until the cook stopped by their table. Finally understanding their requests to know what meat was included, he simply said, "Arf, arf." The dish, it happened, was dog fried rice. At once, Long recalls,

the party stopped eating, and those who did take an additional bite did so not to appreciate the taste aesthetically but purely out of curiosity "and with a definite sense of eating something outside our usual boundaries of what was edible" (2003:22).

This is, of course, a first-person account of a real experience, but it is also a contemporary legend. This genre of folk narrative has been the focus of intensive research since it came to folklorists' attention in the 1960s (see Bennett and Smith 1993; P. Smith 1997). Initially termed "urban" legends (or "big city legends" or "urban belief tales") by Richard Dorson, reflecting its original discussion in the "Is there a folk in the city?" controversy (Brunvand 2000: 14–5), he also called them "modern" legends because of the original belief that they represented a novel kind of narrative, brought into being by emergent forms of technology and the media. However, a careful search of historical records from classical Greek and Roman times on soon uncovered signs of narratives that were cognate to "modern" legends not only in content but in form and function as well. The term "contemporary" legend therefore became a preferred one, as it matches the sense, reflected in historical examples as well as those of our day, that the events related were reported to have "just occurred," whatever the time period of the narrators and their audiences (see Ellis 2001b).

In the case of Long's experience, foodways has crossed from the realm of tourism and into an area studied by folklorists as contemporary legend. But her narrative, one might retort, is not an "urban legend" attributed to a "friend of a friend" but a real-life experience truthfully told by someone who was present. Legend scholars, however, have recognized that the genre is not a specific type of narrative and that its alleged truthfulness is not and should not be a factor in defining a performance as a "legend." Rather, as Linda Dégh (2001:58–79) and I (Ellis 2001a:142–59) have argued, legend is a process rather than a product, a form of cultural debate in which participants explore the boundaries of experience. While some widely spread and controversial narratives have proved to be untrue when investigated by skeptical scholars, as Paul Smith (1984) noted in his discussion of food-contamination rumors and legends in context, most of the stories told as part of the legend-telling process are in fact true or at least not obviously untrue. Gary Alan Fine (1989), too, was able to document large numbers of cases in which consumers had found rodents or other creatures inside bottles of commercial beverages; hence the widespread legend "The Mouse in the Coke Bottle" was based on a substantial body of legally documentable instances. The event recounted above is also part of a large corpus of narratives describing instances when a dog, considered a taboo dish by Europeans and North Americans, was unintentionally consumed. While some of these stories are unverifiable and presumably fictitious, and others are real events accurately related, all are contemporary legends.

More significantly, contemporary legends traditionally explore cultural elements that William Clements (1989) has described as "interstitial" in nature. These topics include aspects of everyday life that were seen at the time as uncanny, dangerous, or difficult to "name," and so they are especially valuable information with which to begin a cultural history of that time. Historian Luise White found African contemporary legends essential to her discussion of the colonial experience; as they "make more connections than other kinds of evidence do . . . [they] insert themselves into

domains of power and regions of the body." Other, more historically respectable forms of evidence, she adds, "do not reveal the same breadth and depth of daily life and thought" (2000:312).

Thus contemporary legend and culinary tourism represent similar folk impulses, in that they intentionally explore the debatable interstices of our world, the gaps between known and unknown, self and other, safety and danger, and, especially, food and filth. It is no surprise that acts of culinary tourism have often been the topic for contemporary legends, often describing exotic foods in an interstitial way: apparently edible, but in fact causing those who consume them to transgress a deeply held taboo. An especially dramatic example concerns the relatives of a person who emigrated to a foreign country. Around Christmas, a typical version goes, they receive a package containing an unfamiliar powder, which they take to be some exotic spice that their relative has sent them as a present from her new foreign home. After trying it in a variety of dishes, they later receive a letter saying that the relative has died and asked that his body be cremated and the ashes sent home for burial. In fact, the relatives' act of culinary tourism has inadvertently turned them into cannibals, the very embodiment of the exotic other (Brunvand 1993:75–9).

Chinese restaurants in particular have been the focus of culinary tourism horror legends. In one especially well-known example, with some remarkable links to Long's real-life experience, a couple visiting an Asian country brings their pet dog along. On a walk, they chance on an interesting restaurant, take a table, and ask the owners also to give their pet something to eat. Not fully understanding the directions (like Long's, they are often given in sign language), the proprietors take the animal to the kitchen and serve it up as a meal for the horrified tourists (Brunvand 1984:95–6). Even Chinese restaurants in Western countries are often rumored to include nonkosher ingredients, including meat taken from stray domestic pets or rats (Brunvand 1984:120–7). In one narrative common in Great Britain during the 1980s, a patron chokes on a meal served in such a restaurant. Rushed to a hospital, the victim has a rat bone extracted from her throat. Later, a search of the restaurant's kitchen reveals more slaughtered and dressed rats, along with cans of cat food and "half an Alsatian dog," ready to be made into the next set of meals (Smith 1983:54).

In a parallel way, genuine incidents in which food poisoning was linked to ethnic-oriented chains like Olive Garden and Taco Bell have regularly made national news, while similar incidents associated with pan-American fast-food or family-style restaurants have received only regional attention. Such a trend was made especially visible in February 2007, when a New York City telejournalism team filmed rats running through a Taco Bell/KFC restaurant after its closing. Taco Bell, an ethnically marked chain, has been the target of repeated charges of serving unclean food, and KFC likewise began as a regional chain featuring its "Kentucky" fried chicken, made from a secret recipe passed down in "Colonel" Sanders's Southern family. (A common rumor held that he had in fact stolen it from an African American cook in his neighborhood.) With fried chicken remaining a treat more widely accepted and consumed by black and Southern white diners—who, like Latinos, are stereotyped as poor, ignorant, and "dirty"—it was inevitable that a report of finding rodents in such a chain store would make national and international news. Humorists like *The Tonight Show*'s

Jay Leno used the scandal as an opportunity to make joking references to familiar urban legends.[1] As typically discussed by legend scholars, though, these widespread legend complexes focus on "dirt" consumed as "food": taboo violation mistaken for nourishment. Therefore, they treat contact with an ethnic foodway as *physically* contaminating but not as *morally* degrading, and they provide only a distant ground, not an immediate explanation, for the legend linking a visit to an ice cream parlor to the first step toward prostitution.

In discussing contamination legends dealing with fried chicken in African American culture, Patricia A. Turner, writing in a book she coauthored with Gary Alan Fine, perceptively adds an idea that can lead to a second, more complex explanation. "Ethnic foods," she argues, "are prepared and consumed by the very people who have created the dishes or by descendants who have had the recipes handed down to them. On special occasions or in special settings, these foods are shared with outsiders eager to participate in 'equal opportunity eating'" (Fine and Turner 2001:143). When corporations like KFC and other white-owned chains appropriate foods that have been strongly associated with ethnic contexts, she reasons, they attack the community in a vulnerable spot. In its proper setting, the preparation and ingestion of home-cooked ethnic food is both nourishing and culturally affirming. Turner, for example, later recalled the "halo" that surrounded the memory of her Aunt Doll, who had for years helped out at community functions by making fried chicken according to her secret family recipe (92).

Hence, the rumors that spring up about contaminated fried chicken portray corporate-made fast food as dangerous not only to the body of the consumer but also to the "sacred territory" of privately prepared food. The issue is not simply a matter of whether KFC chicken in fact contains cooked rat meat, or, in the black parallel, whether Church's fried chicken in fact contains drugs intended to sterilize male consumers. Rather, the issue is that an important element of Southern foodways has been removed from its original context—the family-controlled kitchen. Thus, while the literal content of the legend asserts that the food itself contains some foreign substance that contaminates the consumer (rat meat, drugs produced by the Ku Klux Klan), in fact the point of the legend, as Fine and Turner construct it, is that the food itself is being consumed outside of its proper context (i.e., the home or church supper) and that the inappropriateness of this act puts the consumer at risk. The legends imply that whenever individuals (white or black) allow regional foodways to be prepared by anonymous representatives of a national corporation and eat them outside the safety of the homeplace, the risk of consuming dangerous substances is in fact a direct function of violating cultural foodways norms. It is not simply that there is something in the food that is out of place; the consumers themselves are out of their proper place.

The 1910 ice cream parlor legend is exactly parallel, in that it argues not that the ice cream itself taints those who consume it but that the unsupervised visit to the urban parlor in which it is served is itself a violation of social norms, a move toward a more liberal display of sexual identity. The fried chicken legends deal with a culture's passive willingness to surrender a "sacred" duty to an anonymous corporation, while the ice cream legend hinges on a young woman's active willingness to mingle with

ethnic strangers. Both, however, show foodways choices as reflecting community values. Whether the choice is passive or active, the legends are alike in showing that those who enter a culinary world controlled by outsiders risk turning their moral systems, not their digestive systems, from pure to impure.

The question remains: why especially *ice cream* and not one of the many other treats that were available in big cities at the time? Bawdy African American songs from the early twentieth century were often filled with sexually charged food references. "I need a little sugar in my bowl / I need a little hot dog on my roll," sang Bessie Smith in one of these naughty pieces ([1931] n.d.). Tamales, shrimp, and all-day suckers sold by the ubiquitous "candy man" filled out the repertory of double entendres. All of these would make logical symbols for the indulgence that would turn a decent young woman into a "white slave" who would give her body to ethnic johns. But it is difficult to find references to ice cream as a sexually suggestive foodway, so from a century's distance it is not easy to see why a taste for such a treat would be associated with such a risk in a contemporary legend. To explicate this link, we need to delve deeper into the history of ice cream in American cultural history.

The Emergence of Ice Cream as an "American" Dessert

Reconstructing the place of ice cream in the first decade of the twentieth century is made difficult by the enormous growth in the treat's popularity during the decade that followed. By 1918, the dish was so thoroughly "Americanized" that a common media legend asserted that it had been invented by Martha Washington, who left a bowl of cream outside one cold night for a neighborhood kitty and found it frozen solid in the morning. Tasting it, the first lady found that she had accidentally made a "smooth, delicious custard" (Funderburg 1995:3). Such "Eureka" legends were common: a number of other typical desserts such as the ice cream soda or sundae were similarly said to have been the result of chance accidents that resulted in commercially successful treats. But the truth is more complicated. Ice cream had in fact been fabricated for centuries in Asia and Europe, and the diary of William Black records that the elegant finish of a sumptuous dinner served by the governor of Maryland at his Annapolis home in 1744 was "some fine Ice Cream which, with the Strawberries and Milk, eat most Deliciously" (quoted in Funderburg 1995:3).

However, Black mentions the treat as a rare curiosity, and in fact it remained such throughout the 1800s because of the difficulty of making it. Requiring cream and sugar, which were both luxury foodstuffs during this period, it had to be fabricated in a bowl held over crushed ice (yet another luxury). Unless the preparer kept a spatula moving around the bowl constantly, the cream in the product would separate, and the milk would harden into inedible chunks (which is one problem with the Martha Washington legend). The result would be a runny mess (Williams 2006:88). "Philadelphia-style" ice cream was even more labor-intensive: cream was first whipped, then frozen, then partially thawed and churned, then frozen again. In the 1840s, a variety of hand-cranked freezers were marketed to make the process easier. While some of them claimed to make ice cream in ten minutes or less, one period cookbook stated that a quart of ice cream took half an hour to freeze, add-

ing judiciously, "and sometimes longer" (Williams 2006:89). Personal letters and memoirs documenting this period, surveyed by Anne Cooper Funderburg (1995:35–40), show that the process remained a drawn-out, onerous one, lasting the better part of a morning or afternoon. In a letter describing one Fourth of July event, Elizabeth Prentiss told her correspondent that a new-fangled churn, advertised to make ice cream in two minutes, in fact occupied the whole family "from half-past twelve to nearly two o'clock, when we decided to have dinner and leave the servants to finish it. It came to the table at last, very rich and rather good" (quoted in Funderburg 1995:37). For this reason, the dish remained the property of the upper classes, with servants available to finish the chore, or became the fondly remembered highlight of a once-a-summer family picnic, in which all participants took part in the wearisome task.

A variety of records show that this dessert was uncommon in the United States prior to 1900. Amelia Simmons's 1796 *American Cookery*, the first truly native foodways book, contains no recipe for ice cream. Even after more-efficient freezers became available, records of its being made outside of urban and upper-class settings continue to be uncommon. A record of a fancy dinner held by a hostess of the Washington, D.C., "Smart Set" during the McKinley era still commented that the ice cream finish was "wonderful to behold." The diarist, Ellen Maury Slayden, wife of a Texas congressman, recorded that it was so unfamiliar that one senator from a western state attempted to pop the scoop into his mouth, complete with the cloth doily on which it was served (Funderburg 1995:81). Other records from rural America bear out how strange the dish was at the time. When ice cream was first served in the territory that later became Wyoming, according to a witness's reminiscence published in 1933, one backwoodsman at table commented, "Where in ____ does this stuff come from," while another explained, "Shut up, you fool. It comes in cans" (quoted in Funderburg 1995:83).

Such upper-crust delicacies obviously influenced the development of the ice cream industry that emerged in the twentieth century (Funderburg 1995). But the perilous ice cream parlor of the white slave era was in fact the latest development of an ethnic Italian foodways tradition, that of the street vendors referred to generally as "hokey-pokey men."[2] The term "hokey-pokey," which we know now as a child's dance, in fact comes from a street cry collected both in the United States and Great Britain: "Here's the stuff to make you jump; hokey-pokey, penny a lump." (This quickly entered into children's folklore as part of a jump-rope rhyme, which probably inspired its use in the familiar song.) The origin and meaning of "hokey pokey" are unclear, but Italian immigrants made up a large part of the country's ice cream vendors, drawing their recipes from indigenous recipes for gelato. Early records suggest that it combined an Italian street cry "*O, che pochi*," understood as "Look how cheap it is," with the familiar magicians' catchphrase "hocus pocus." In any case, "hokey-pokey" became the common term of streetside ice cream, and vendors represented a wide range of immigrant groups as well as African Americans, who quickly joined the trade (Funderburg 1995:73–4). In 1892, an American cookbook, *The Practical Confectioner and Cake Baker*, glossed "hokey-pokey" as a type of ice cream "which you can buy on the New York streets from the sons of sunny Italy" (quoted in Funderburg 1995:73).

One of the difficulties that hokey-pokey men faced, however, was how to serve the treat. Some expected customers to produce their own dish; other vendors provided one, waited for the patron to eat up, then wiped the dish clean and put it away for the next buyer. Most often, Funderburg notes, the portion was dipped onto a small piece of brown paper, but by 1899 vendors in New York City were making ice cream sandwiches by pressing a scoop between two thin wafers (1995:106). This produced a treat that the customer could carry away and eat. Needless to say, the purity of hokey-pokey ice cream was usually suspect, and public health officials in Philadelphia and New York regularly warned consumers about the unsanitary practices of vendors and blamed contaminated batches for summertime epidemics of typhoid fever (Funderburg 1995:75–6). Nevertheless, the streetside trade was profitable enough that successful vendors began to take over storefront shops, turning them into "parlors" where patrons could sit and eat the treat out of bowls. Such parlors drew on the emerging popularity of "soda fountains," machines that charged drinking water with carbon dioxide and served it flavored with a variety of syrups. As Paul Dickson and Funderburg show, these had proved a popular success when first demonstrated at the 1876 Centennial Fair in Philadelphia, and by the 1890s they had been installed in a variety of businesses in large cities, predominantly drug stores (Dickson 1972:88–99; Funderburg 1995:85–98). The so-called ice cream soda, which actually combined carbonated water with regular cream and shaved ice, was already popular enough by the mid-1890s that it was being called "our national beverage" (Dickson 1972:61–4; Funderburg 1995:100–3).

The controversy over the invention of the ice cream cone showed that the treat retained a strong element of ethnic identity. Contemporary records (usefully summarized by Funderburg 1995:117–22) agree that the innovation was popularized at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, though attempts to identify exactly who deserved credit for the invention ended in confusion. However, comparison of the legends leave little doubt that the idea was not new; rather, it was the logical solution to the hokey-pokey man's dilemma of how to serve the treat neatly to customers who wanted to walk off with their portion. Early versions agree that the cone first appeared on the fair's main midway, a street simply called "The Pike" that ran from the entrance for about a mile. The Missouri Historical Society's extensive Web site, *1904 World's Fair: Looking Back at Looking Forward* (2005), provides a detailed account of this exposition, including a map and many contemporary photographs and souvenirs.[3] Along this stretch, this Web site shows, visitors were enticed by a variety of exhibits, rides, and live shows, including one reenacting the creation of the world. This area featured a trip around the world, with buildings and live shows recreating foreign cultures from the Tyrolean Alps to Russia and Japan. One section, which charged an additional fee, took visitors to the "Streets of Cairo and Constantinople," where tourists could watch hoochy-koochy dancers, visit the replica of a mosque, or take camel rides. As with most fairs, these sideshows were accompanied by strips of restaurants offering exotic foods, and it evidently was in one of these strips that the idea emerged of combining two ethnically tinged items into a single convenient treat.

During the patent litigation that followed the World's Fair, six candidates for "inventing" the ice cream cone emerged, as Funderburg documents (1995:117–22): two

were Syrian, one was Turkish, and one was Lebanese. All agreed that the idea emerged by happenstance when customers visited two adjacent booths: one sold a pastry item, variously described as a waffle, a waffle cookie, or a *zalabia*, a Levantine, cookielike treat. As Jack Marlowe, an observer of modern Middle Eastern cooking, explains, it was traditionally baked over an open fire in a hinged cast-iron platen, then sprinkled with sugar before eating (Marlowe 2003:4). The other booth sold hokey-pokey-style ice cream, which was served in a dish. Customers had to eat the dish seated at the booth, then return the dish to the proprietor. One witness claimed that the idea came from the Middle Eastern custom of rolling a pita bread to hold food such as sour cream (Funderburg 1995:118); in any case, customers learned to roll the waffle-like pastry into a cone while it was still warm. When it cooled, it proved to be substantial enough to hold a scoop of ice cream, and the customer could ask the proprietor to put this serving into the pastry and then consume both while continuing toward a nearby hoochy-koochy performance. The idea caught on rapidly, and after the fair closed, several of the concessionaires immediately purchased or adapted presses for making cones in commercial quantities.

The story is substantiated by World's Fair records that show that at least fifty vendors had received permits to sell ice cream and nearly as many for selling "waffles" (Dickson 1972:69). But the difficulty with the story is that waffles, as they were usually made in the United States, did not harden quickly enough to hold ice cream. The universal references to waffle ovens or presses, however, make it clear that what was being fabricated was zalabia. Because such thin wafers came off the platens still soft enough to form, yet stiffened as they cooled, both Turkish and Italian immigrants had already used them as "horns" to fill with sweetened cream or else filled them with icing and rolled them into tubes, known as cannoli.

Whether or not the first actual cones were made in the Turkish section of the St. Louis World's Fair, certainly, as Missouri Historical Society's *1904 World's Fair* Web site demonstrates, the event introduced many forms of novel foodways to the American public at large, and the principle was one that Italian immigrants understood and immediately exploited. In fact, the only person to receive a patent for an item resembling an ice cream cone was an Italian, Italo Marchiony, a Manhattan hokey-pokey vendor who actually had submitted a plan for molding dough into "ice cream cups" in 1903, the year before the fair (Funderburg 1995:121). While Marchiony's idea arguably led to the molded flat-bottomed cones that are most familiar now, he was unable to claim royalties on the rolled pizzelle cones, and in fact both styles of cone remain in use alongside each other to this day.

So ice cream, however "American" it came to seem in the decade ahead, was still an ethnically charged food for most Americans in 1910. Mediterranean immigrants deserve the credit for taking the treat from its original context as an upper-class luxury out into city streets to become an indulgence for all classes. Like the soda fountains, which were experiencing a boom during this period, the new ice cream parlor was a storefront establishment owned and managed by immigrants. Such parlors, like the St. Louis World's Fair's "Streets of Cairo and Constantinople," represented a liminal realm where members of differing races and ethnic backgrounds mingled and where mainstream white Americans, male and female, could indulge in culinary tourism.

While this opportunity now seems innocuous, at the time such a choice brought together two cultural factors that crystallized briefly into the "spider's web" of the dangerous ice cream parlor: the increasing move toward educating (and potentially empowering) young, unmarried white women and the increasing economic role played by immigrants, particularly Italians, in developing the American food industry.

"College Ice": Small-Town Women in Big-City Parlors

To begin: if in this time period ordering ice cream was for the moment an act of culinary tourism, why did the legend emerge that young *women* were at risk, rather than all white consumers? This side of the legend developed from a series of moral crusades, originally anti-Semitic in nature, that arose in Europe during the late nineteenth century. Participants in these moral crusades, as historian Edward J. Bristow (1983) documents, included a wide range of reform and religious organizations, ranging from the Salvation Army to proponents of anti-obscenity statutes, such as the American reformer Anthony Comstock. A common allegation, Bristow notes, was that Jewish procurers were actively involved in recruiting young women, often drugging and kidnapping them and then shipping them to brothels all over the world. While Jewish charitable organizations such as B'nai B'rith quickly conceded that ghettoes were rife with prostitution, with both the procurers and the women being Jewish, repeated investigations showed that no coercion was involved and that the women participated willingly as a means of alleviating the financial hardships that affected most Jewish communities. In countries where Jewish immigrants had avenues to move from entry-level work to more respectable work, Bristow shows, women spent only a few years in the profession before quitting. Hence the problem was "self-correcting" (1983:320–2).

Nevertheless, beginning in the 1880s, the popular media in Europe reported a series of sensational cases alleging a well-organized international trade in prostitutes controlled by wealthy Jews. In 1892, a number of Jewish pimps were put on trial in Vienna for having conspired to ship prostitutes to foreign ports as far afield as Brazil and Turkey. Press coverage of the "Jewish white slave traffic" in Austria was intense and often implied that such rings were responsible for the mysterious disappearance of young non-Jewish girls. Franz Schneider, an openly anti-Semitic politician and rabble-rouser, gave a speech in the Austrian Parliament in which he alluded to "countless cases in which Christian servants employed by Jews disappear without trace, carried off to a dreadful fate in the brothels of Hungary, the Orient and South America, despite the vigilance of the legal authorities. These cases are connected with the incredible crimes committed by Jews because of their superstitions for the purpose of getting hold of Christian blood and calling to heaven for revenge" (quoted in Bristow 1983:82).

During the intense "white slavery" panic that occurred in both Great Britain and the United States from 1910 to 1913, Frederick Bullock, a special prosecutor appointed by Scotland Yard to investigate the matter, commented that "All sorts of stories, sensational and wholly improbable, were repeated from mouth to mouth of sudden disappearances, abductions, and attempts to entice and allure innocent girls"

(quoted in Bristow 1983:44). The most widespread held that white slavers would anesthetize women in some public place by jabbing them with a "poisoned needle." An official Massachusetts inquiry noted that one common story involved "the administration of a narcotic drug by the use of a hypodermic needle by a procurer, who plies the needle on his victim as he passes her on the street, or as he sits beside her in the street car or in the theatre." When investigators tried to trace such claims to real events, the Massachusetts inquiry concluded, they inevitably found that they relied on the authority of a legendary "friend-of-a-friend" (*Prostitution* 1976:22). When similar claims surfaced in New York City in 1913–14, an unnamed physician was willing to say that the stories might be based on some truth, due to "the extreme scantiness of women's apparel" (quoted in Bristow 1983:44).

The perpetrators were allegedly part of an ethnically controlled prostitution industry, and the women were being abducted to sell into brothels in some far-off or even foreign city. Constantinople (which we recall was the inspiration for the St. Louis World's Fair site where ice cream cones were fabricated) was repeatedly mentioned as the ultimate destination for abducted European white slaves, who were then sold secretly at auction to Arab sheiks for their harems. The needle variant, as Jan Harold Brunvand observed, remained current late into the century, with young girls injected with drugs like heroin, cocaine, or LSD, often through a seat in a darkened movie theater (1984:79–80). Such needle legends then provided motifs that led to ostensive pranks in cities such as New York (see Ellis 1989) and soon became the dominant form of AIDS legends, with victims maliciously injecting tainted blood into random passersby or leaving contaminated needles in public places, often (as before) a theater seat (Bennett 2005:114–6). Again, though, such legends seem to have little to do with culinary tourism. While the choice of a treat might provide an ethnic procurer with the opportunity to use the poisoned needle (the phallic nature of which seems self-evident), why was the ice cream *parlor* a spider's web that used the treat as a bait to entrap young women into a life of shame? This side of the legend needs to be unpacked separately.

A "parlor" was a place associated with the social life of young women of marriageable age. Max Sugar observes that, in turn-of-the-century courtship practices among "proper middle-class young ladies," a young man of the right sort visited an eligible woman's home and courted her in a room set aside for visitors (1993:128), rather than in a part of the house used for more intimate activities (such as sleeping). Such practices likewise gave parents and other family members ample opportunity to chaperone the courting couple. Opportunities to meet with potential partners outside the parlor were carefully limited. The 1890s were a period of intense political lobbying over the public sale of liquor, and so a barroom or saloon was already seen as an inappropriate place for such a girl to enter, even to purchase a nonalcoholic beverage. As Funderburg records, by the turn of the century, soda fountains were promoted by temperance organizations as wholesome places for young people, particularly young women, to patronize. "Temperance sired the soda fountain," a turn-of-the-century source cited by Funderburg says, "and the ladies of the movement selflessly mothered it in the fond hope that it would someday vanquish the bar" (quoted in Funderburg 1995: 99). Soda fountains were seen as an acceptable place for unmarried women to frequent, and the

industry promoted carbonated beverages as a safe alternative to draft beer. By 1892, a trade journal for drug store proprietors was observing that "No successful soda fountains sell ardent spirits in their soda" (quoted in Funderburg 1995:99).

However, such places developed a reputation for fostering casual, unchaperoned contacts between the sexes, particularly among young people. This in itself created sexual tensions, as did the tactical liberation of such girls from parental control through higher education. As Nancy E. Durbin and Lori Kent found by examining turn-of-the-century enrollment data (1989), women entered postsecondary institutions in dramatically higher numbers during the last decades of the 1800s, ostensibly to fill a growing demand for public schoolteachers, which was still seen as a female occupation. In fact, during the period from 1900 to 1930, males and females enrolled in college in about equal numbers (Goldin, Katz, and Kuziemko 2006:133).

The detailed analysis of the content of women's education by Durbin and Kent illustrates details about gender and higher education in the period that the raw numbers do not show. The median age of marriage for white women during this time was nearly twenty-two years of age, which opened up a dangerous period between the age of sexual maturity (with its relatively protected environment of a local high school education) and the safe haven of marriage. For this reason, many parents considered college "a pleasant way to pass time before marrying," and a large proportion of students who enrolled in higher education did so with no serious intentions of learning a specialized trade. "In this sense," Durbin and Kent conclude, "postsecondary institutions 'warehoused' surplus female labor by providing young women with an alternative to idleness, marriage, or gainful employment" (1989:3). The ice cream parlor was associated with such a socially "warehoused" clientele early on, so much so that what we now call a sundae, or dish of ice cream with syrup or fruit added, was initially known as a "college ice."[4]

So the ice cream parlor, in a cultural sense, was initially seen as a place similar to the literal parlor in a Victorian-style home, a "safe haven" for a young female to meet potential husbands during the dangerous period between puberty and marriage. Its appropriation by groups of young people outside the home meant that girls, while inside this commercial substitute for the domestic parlor, could engage in casual conversation and public courtship with members of the opposite sex. And now we have found a thread of the legend that does in fact speak to the dangers seen by white slavery crusaders. When a young girl comes to the city to enroll in a school, District Attorney Sims warned parents, she instinctively seems to make acquaintances. "She must have some one to talk to," he observes; "it is the law of youth as well as the law of her sex to crave constant companionship." As a result, "she is sentimentally in a condition to prepare her for the slaughter, to make her an easy prey to the wiles of the 'white slave' wolf" (1910:69). The best thing for a rural girl would be to stay in the country under her parents' constant control, Sims advised (i.e., to stay in the parlor of her own home). If she were to come to the city to study, he added, she should stay "in the very best type of an educational institution where the girl students were always under the closest protection" (1910:71).

The "parlor," in short, was an emic term for a kind of cultural warehouse, where unmarried women could meet potential husbands in a socially acceptable fashion.

In the wider worldview that the legend expressed, women who left the protection of the family circle had to choose between the two kinds of commercially run "warehouses." One, a risky but acceptable option, was the domain of higher education, with chaperones acting *in loco parentis*; the other was its grotesque parody, the house of prostitution, in which procurers literally warehoused females as sexual chattel. The ice cream "parlor" was an interstitial realm for young women. There she could be, for a time, outside the authority of parental figures, yet not engaging in behavior explicitly defined as sinful, such as drinking or dancing. As such, it was one of a variety of novel amusements common in big cities such as Chicago, which included movie theaters and other settings where mainstream whites and ethnic others could find themselves standing or sitting next to each other.

In these "interzones," as Kevin Mumford (1997) christened them, Anglos could come into close contact with many ethnic cultures. In the midst of the current controversy over immigration, it is worth reminding ourselves that the decade between 1900 and 1910 was marked by the highest rate of foreign influx proportional to the total population ever recorded. In addition, while previous waves of immigration had come from Northern European cultures that were at least perceived to be well educated and productive, the newer immigrants came from Mediterranean cultures such as Italy, which were considered lower in status and more difficult to assimilate (see, for example, Gambino 1977). The *McClures* journalist George Kibbe Turner expressed this sentiment dramatically when he alluded to Italians as one of the "rough and hairy tribes which have been drawn to Chicago." Such immigrants, Turner warned, when they were "suddenly freed from the restraints of poverty and of rigid police authority . . . furnish an alarming volume of savage crime" as they "slip back into a form of city savagery" (quoted by Donovan 2006:60–1). Thus, the interzones that developed proved to be liminal grounds that, predictably, were both exciting places for cultural and culinary tourism by curious whites, as well as fertile topics for contemporary legends about the vicious and inhuman crimes that might be perpetrated on the unwary diners.

As historian Hasia R. Diner (2001) shows, this same period was marked by a dramatic shift in the American food industry, as Italian immigrants, used to a culture based on the scarcity of food, applied traditional methods of intensive farming, as well as thrifty food fabrication and marketing, to the relative prosperity of the American landscape. Italian Americans quickly organized complex culinary networks, which began by supplying fellow immigrants with pasta and other foods identified as "old country." As these ventures provided them with a means of moving from jobs at the subsistence level to modest levels of entrepreneurship, they increasingly provided foodstuffs and prepared "Italian" cuisine to other ethnic groups (notably Greek immigrants). In time, mainstream white populations also became aware of ostensibly Italian dishes such as spaghetti and meatballs and pizza, which, in their North American form, were both essentially Italian American reinventions, as Diner shows. He quotes an interesting observation by a visiting Sicilian merchant, who, in the 1920s, visited an Italian restaurant in New York City, where he first encountered a number of "very fine, traditional American specialties," one of them being "spaghetti with meatballs." Ironically, he commented that it was so foreign to his experience of real Italian cuisine that it must have been "just for fun called Italian," but he added that

it was in fact very delicious and concluded, "I think someone in Italy should invent [such a dish] for the Italians over there" (quoted in Diner 2001:54). Pizza in the old country, Diner notes, was associated narrowly with Neapolitan cookery, and even there it was quite unlike the common Italian American staple, which was always served with tomato sauce and cheese, and typically served at a table rather than eaten on the run in the street (2001:61).

Means of producing fresh fruits and vegetables in the most intensive and economical ways possible were necessities in Italy, but in the United States they made it possible for immigrants to put together large-scale agricultural enterprises, moving products from truck farms surrounding major urban centers to low-cost pushcarts and fruit stands (Diner 2001:63). As a result, Italian Americans who achieved management positions in these networks rose quickly in economic and political status: the Del Monte Corporation was one of several Italian-dominated consortia of fresh produce wholesalers that emerged in the 1880s and became the leading suppliers of foodstuffs to cities at the turn of the century. In Indianapolis, Diner notes, the fruit stand opened by the first Sicilian immigrant to arrive in the city in 1888 quickly shifted to wholesaling as others followed his lead, and less than twenty years after his arrival, the proprietor was appointed the municipal manager of all urban markets. Food, Diner concludes, was for Italians no longer a "badge of class subjugation" but rather "a step up from poverty" (2001:64).

It was significant that the most-common term for the social danger of prostitution was "white *slavery*," as many of the stereotypes previously applied to slaves were openly applied to Italians. "I do believe that the root of the trouble is laziness," *The White Slave Hell*, a 1910 religious tract, said of the immigrants. "They come from countries where the highest good is just to lie in the sun and sleep. They do not, they cannot, understand the love of work, the dignity of labor, the joy of accomplishment" (quoted in Donovan 2006:30). Paradoxically, the process of entrepreneurial empowerment that Diner documents was based precisely on Italian Americans' propensity for intensive labor, made more effective through cooperation of ethnic factions now united by a common ethnic identity. "I saw that the great thing about [America] is that it is good for the working man," an unnamed Italian immigrant commented in his memoirs, adding significantly, "I can go out and eat in a restaurant and sit next to anyone I want" (quoted in Diner 2001:52).

For xenophobic Americans, however, social mobility was seen as so at odds with foreign birth that, then as now, immigrants who were not poor were assumed to be operating as part of a network of criminals. The earliest Mafia-type rumors held that Italians controlled the prostitution trade and were intimately involved with it at all levels, from the enticing of naive women to paying off the police and municipal investigators. Already at this time, "gang wars" were blamed for interethnic murders, as Italian gangsters battled with Jewish and French kingpins for control of big-city crime. District Attorney Sims wrote:

> there is a kind of fellowship among these foreign proprietors of refreshment parlors which would make it entirely natural and convenient for the proprietor of a city establishment of this kind, who is entangled in the "white slave" trade, to establish

> relations with a man in the same business and of the same nationality in the country town. I do not mean to intimate by this that all the ice cream and fruit "saloons" having foreign-born proprietors are connected with the "white slave" traffic—but some of them are, and this fact is sufficient to cause all careful and thoughtful parents of young girls to see that they do not frequent these places. (1910:72)

Sims's mention of "fruit 'saloons'" as being an interstitial location similar to the perilous ice cream parlor also connects with yet another complex of contemporary legend. Observers commented on the remarkable diversity of fruits and vegetables on display in Italian neighborhoods. New York City's Mulberry Street (later made famous by one of Dr. Seuss's first successful children's books) was one such paradise of fruit saloons: one tourbook promoting ethnic tourism in Manhattan commented that, "What strikes one first is the beauty and the variety of the vegetables and fruits sold there in what is supposed to be one of the poorest quarters" (quoted in Diner 2001:63). The networks generated by Italian Americans quickly extended to foreign imports, including another exotic novelty, the banana.

This fruit, too, quickly attracted contemporary legends, notably that persons who handled it could be killed from the bites of deadly tarantulas hiding inside the bunches. By 1910 these legends were already so prevalent that the popular investigative journalist Samuel Hopkins Adams included them in a longer article titled "The Poison Bugaboo," which debunked, Brunvand-style, a whole series of apocryphal stories about snakes, spiders, and centipedes. It is true, he admitted, that tarantulas "frequently drop out of banana bunches from South or Central America, to the discomfiture of the unsuspecting grocer," but he could find no verifiable case of a deadly incident. He did find, however, a St. Louis news account headlined "IN TWO WEEKS Three Men Have Died From Bites of Tarantulas" and claiming that "the victims were banana handlers in the wholesale fruit district." An "exhaustive inquiry" in the area, particularly among fruit dealers, turned up no verification, and Adams concluded, "The report was a pure fake" (S. Adams 1910:522).

Nevertheless, the legend remained active throughout the century (though often substituting black widow spiders for tarantulas as the agent), and bananas remained a potentially deadly object in folk narrative.[5] A common joke told of two girls who bought bananas for the first time while on a train trip. One peels hers and takes the first bite, at which point the train enters a tunnel. "Have you started your banana yet?" she asks the other. "Well, don't . . . It makes you go blind" (Warner 2007:352). While intended to provoke laughter, like other humor based on the fruit's phallic implications, "the laughter it inspires," cultural historian Marina Warner says, "reverberates around its paradoxical potency and defends against the threatening associations that it sets stirring" (373).

Such associations were still being felt as recently as 2000, when an especially intense Internet flap occurred in response to a hoax message from a nonexistent "Manheim Research Institute." This alleged that

> Several shipments of bananas from Costa Rica have been infected with necrotizing fasciitis, otherwise known as flesh eating bacteria. . . . It is advised not to purchase Bananas for the next three weeks as this is the period of time for which bananas that

> have been shipped to the US with the possibility of carrying this disease.
>
> If you have eaten a banana in the last 2–3 days and come down with a fever followed by a skin infection seek MEDICAL ATTENTION!!! (quoted in Emery 2000)

In fact, as Warner documents, the banana never fully lost its exotic associations, being a physical object from a tropical world and arriving in the marketplace having been handled by a multitude of unknown and presumably ethnic hands. Ice cream, by contrast, had no such necessary link to ethnicity. Originally, it was associated with hokey-pokey pushcart vendors and ethnic streetside parlors that, as Funderburg records, would of course serve both the ice cream and the crushed fruits that were normally served with sundaes (1995:103). The banana split may well have been one of these early concoctions, though, as Dickson notes, it did not become widely popular until the 1920s (1972:33). Once ice cream parlors became common in all communities, large and small, and as the main ingredient was provided by pan-American corporations with anonymous names such as Sealtest, the "white slavery" legend lost its potency. The banana, however, never lost its legendary potency, as it continued to be seen as a tangible link between middle-class white Americans and the mysterious Third World.

However, like any contemporary legend document, the ice cream parlor variant provides an opportunity to see and explore issues of cultural history that would otherwise remain unexpressed and difficult to trace. Keeping the threads that I have followed separately in mind, watch how they combine to form a complex visual text in the notorious graphic, "The First Step" (Figure 1), which appeared near the beginning of *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls*. We see a young white woman, dressed in a stylish but sexually discreet gown that covers her up to the top of her neck, clearly a representative of the urbanized female who has come to the city to be "finished" as a marriageable property in a professional school. Ah, but she is sitting in a public place, and we see behind her a stereotyped Italian American with copious facial hair, glancing knowingly in her direction as he dispenses a drink into a glass. A closer look reveals the parlor's attractions: "ICE CREAM" in large letters above the proprietor, "SODA" to his left, and beside this sign dangles a bunch of bananas. "Ice cream parlors of the city and fruit stores combined, largely run by foreigners," the caption reads, "are the places where scores of girls have taken their first step downward" (Bell 1910: facing page 18).

On the dish before the woman is a mound of ice cream, the first bite of which is still in the spoon that she holds daintily in her hand. But who is her companion, the older male who has sat down beside her (recall the anonymous Italian immigrant quoted above, who boasted, "I can go out and eat in a restaurant and sit next to anyone I want"), dressed in a derby and pin-striped suit? "Does her mother know the character of the place and the man she is with?" the caption continues. And, indeed, do we? By making the face of the male partner an ambiguous mix of foreign characteristics, the artist cleverly suggests a range of possibilities: Middle Eastern, Asian, even black; in any case, a synthesis of the big city's multicultural world and the parlor's potency as an urban interzone, a place for culinary tourism, both in a literal and a symbolic, sexually charged sense.

The bananas dangle just behind the mysterious man's hat, implicitly connecting him with the deadly tarantulas that the bunch might well contain. Attorney Sims's

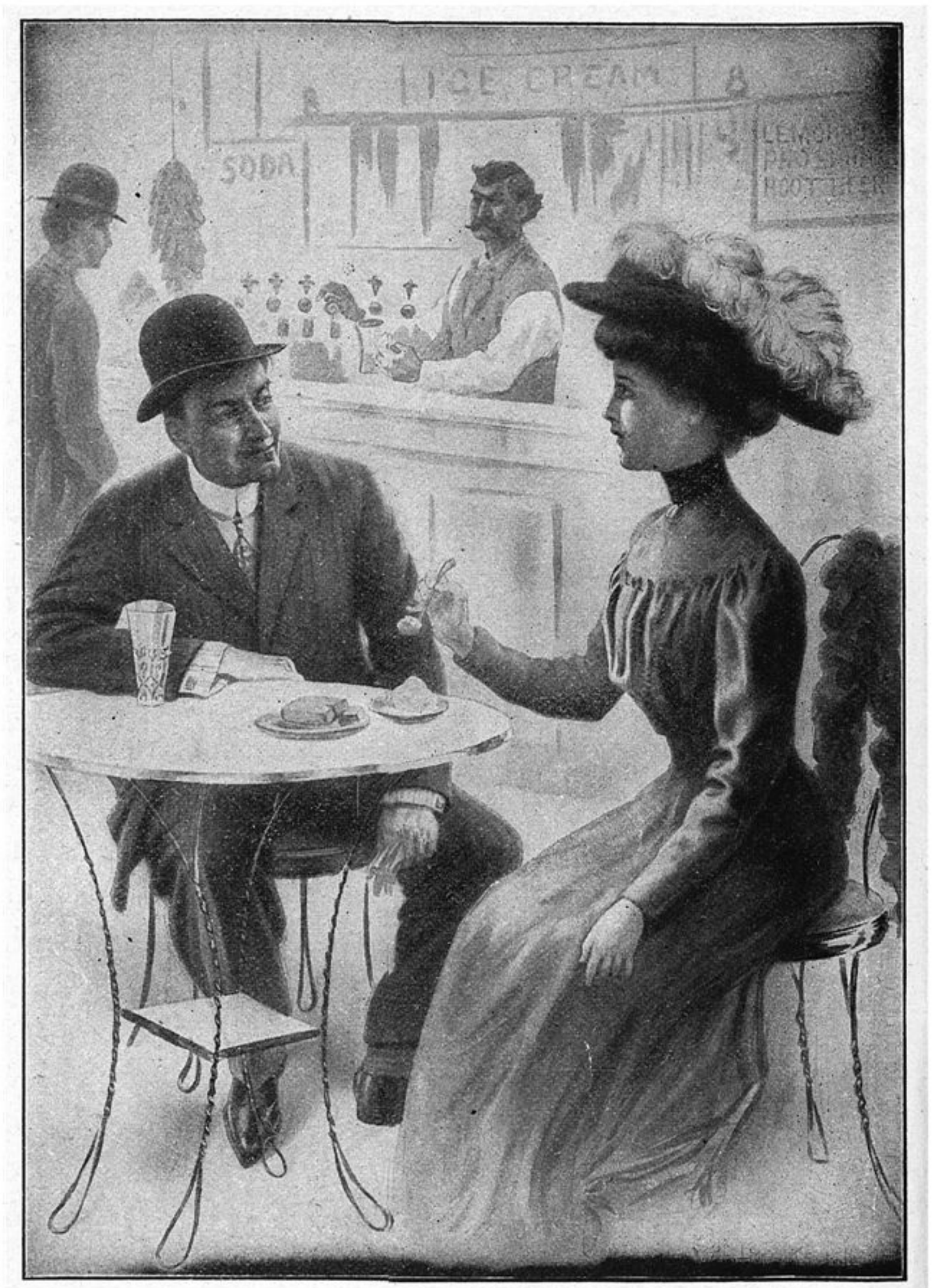

Figure 1. "The First Step," from Ernest A. Bell's 1910 tract, *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls, or, War on the White Slave Trade.*

warning whispers quietly in our ears: "One thing should be made very clear to the girl who comes up to the city, and that is that the ordinary ice cream parlor is very likely to be a spider's web for her entanglement." The liminal turf that this minimally liberated female had entered, white slave crusaders argued, was a dangerous realm where chance contacts with ethnic others would whisk the innocent one quickly from the safe home parlor into the parlors of sin. Another crusader's tract said: "From the dance hall; from the beer garden; from the saloon; from the ball room; from the nickel theater; from the respectable theater; from the ice cream parlor; from

the hotel; from the church; from the depot; from the excursion boat; from the park; from the street; from the village and from the quiet farmstead home in the hills the Octopus on the Lake draws our nation's fairest daughters into its unsatisfied maw of lust" (quoted in Donovan 2006:26). The imagery connects exactly with the precise way in which the legend claimed that ice cream was dangerous: itself innocuous, it proved to be an especially effective means by which "our nation's fairest daughters" (i.e., young unmarried white women) were placed in direct physical proximity to strangers with allegedly unbridled libidos. By placing oneself in an eating establishment controlled by foreigners, and by eating a treat associated with foreignness, the innocent one runs the risk of *becoming* foreign.

Conclusion

In 1910, ice cream was more of an ethnic novelty for most of America than pizza or sushi are today, so it came laced with the savor of foreignness. The new treat quickly entered contemporary legends of the period, and the act of walking into a place where it was sold was, in the crusaders' words, a risk akin to entering "a spider's web." Like other urban interzones such as movie theaters, buses and trains, and amusement parks, ice cream parlors were culturally dangerous places precisely because they were sites in which ethnic groups met, mingled, held social intercourse, and sought out common forms of entertainment, recreation, and food. The contemporary legend was, in part, a reaction to the increasing tendency of young women to engage in culinary tourism, which in turn was a function of their nascent move toward intellectual independence, even if the education offered at the time tracked them into service professions, and marriage and homemaking.

Ice cream did not remain an ethnic temptation for long. It swiftly moved into the ordinary foodways of urban and suburban America, paralleling the increasing tendency of women to leave the safe parlors of their homes and spend time in the perilous parlors that lined city streets. Already by 1892, Pennsylvania State College had introduced the first university-level course in commercial ice cream manufacture (Funderburg 1995:66). Nationwide production of the dessert totaled only 5 million gallons in 1899; this increased sixfold to 30 million gallons in 1909; then thirtyfold to 150 million gallons in 1919. By 1920, technological advances in refrigeration and insulation created mass-production ice cream plants that relegated the neighborhood hokey-pokey vendors and the immigrant-owned ice cream parlor to the past.

Like the African origins of *gallo pinto* that have recently been erased from Costa Rica's popular memory (see Theresa Preston-Werner's article in this issue), the ethnic roots of ice cream were quickly effaced in favor of the country's founding fathers. The bowl of cream left outside by Martha Washington for the stray kitty would have frozen into an inedible mess, but as a "foundation legend," it helped solidify the position of the dessert as an all-American treat, universally acceptable for all classes and genders. The white slave legend, deprived of the fear of liminality that gave it power in 1910, yielded to the "poisoned needle" ecotype, and, in time, it survived only as a humorous side trip down memory lane. Or perhaps the legend fell dormant through its own success: as ice cream was being appropriated from ethnic entrepre-

neurs who made the innovations that allowed for its widespread marketing, punitive laws were being passed that placed strict limits on Mediterranean immigration and gave local police more power to crack down on alleged crime rings.

Nevertheless, in a small town in central New York more than a half century later, my wife was ordered not to go inside the local ice cream parlor: "fast" boys hung out there, her parents said, and besides it was owned by Greeks. The forbidden treat, seemingly Americanized by big business, still had an exotic flavor. "Eating affects us biologically and physiologically as well as socially and ideologically," Elliott Oring observes. "Consequently, we are likely to bring a great fund of emotion to the behavior of eating." Given this intense emotionality, he reasons, "it is not surprising that foodways serve as highly charged markers of ethnic identity both for those within a group and for those without" (1986:34–5). The inverse seems also to be true: *not* eating something, or at least advising your children not to eat it, is equally important to cultural identity. You are what you eat, the ice cream parlor legend suggests, and if you consume immigrant food, particularly in an establishment controlled by foreigners, then the act of ingesting it puts your own cultural identity into question.

Notes

1. For instance, on the night of February 23, 2007, Leno suggested that you could floss your teeth after eating a bucket of chicken with the leftover rat tail and commented, "Taco Bell and KFC . . . is that a good combination to begin with?"

2. Dickson's history of the ice cream industry (1972) does not say much about this influence, other than to note that the term "hokey-pokey" was in use as early as 1872 (83). He reproduces a number of turn-of-the-century engravings and photographs of street vendors in which their ethnicity and low social status are apparent. See especially the rather grotesque 1901 engraving on page 21, captioned "Thriftless, but affectionate, is the lower class parent. Shoes the child must do without . . . but here is five cents to buy hokey-pokey."

3. Details about this influential exposition, which is also credited for popularizing the hot dog as well, here are drawn from the original source posted on the *1904 World's Fair: Looking Back at Looking Forward* Web site (2005). The site documents the event and reproduces many period photographs and artifacts, including an admission ticket to the Cairo/Constantinople exhibit, where the ice cream cone was said to have been first fabricated.

4. It is also interesting that the term "sundae" was slow to be standardized, with the origin legend connecting it to the day of the week being, as with other "Eureka" stories, a later fabrication. Funderburg found the treat spelled "sundi" or even "sundhi" in early publications, both apparently stressing the dessert's exotic nature rather than its alleged godliness (2001:105).

5. This legend type has continued to emerge in the United States, particularly among African Americans, and has been discussed by academics under the title "The Snake in the Greens" (e.g., Miller 2005). The emphasis in these recent versions, however, is not the specific type of food in which the dangerous animal hides but the negligence of the supermarket chain for not inspecting fruits and vegetables before putting them out for customers to handle. As such, as Fine (1989) observed, its thematic ties are with legend complexes in which deadly snakes are found in nonfood products like carpets and clothing.

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